

March 21, 2023

Dear Minnesota House and Senate Leadership,

As leaders in farm and food systems statewide, our organizations have eagerly been watching the many exciting proposals included in the Governor's proposed budget and passed as bills throughout the legislative session so far. With a historic \$17.6 billion surplus, our state legislature has a unique opportunity and responsibility to deliver for small- and mid-sized farmers, our farm and food system, rural communities and families in need across the state. We are writing to urge you to set an agriculture budget target that creates space for appropriate investment in Minnesota's farm and food system.

Right now, the state spends less than 0.5% of its budget on agriculture, which is responsible for \$112 billion annually in total economic impact in Minnesota. This economy is driven by farmers, farmworkers, food makers, processors and entrepreneurs, who are vital to stewarding our soils, nourishing our communities, and are the bedrock of many of our rural communities. In order to better reflect the contributions of Minnesota's agriculture stakeholders and best meet the needs of Minnesotans, as you and your colleagues develop budget targets, we urge you to provide ample funding for these committees to tangibly deliver for people and the land. Investing in our farmers, food system, and providing healthy, local products to Minnesotans is one of the smartest investments our state can make. Together, we can:

- Increase financial and capacity investments in infrastructure, small and mid-size processing and market development state-wide, supporting resilient local and regional food systems that strengthen rural economies .
- Enable land access and farm viability for emerging farmers, expanding capital, training, technical assistance, and support for small- and mid-sized emerging, beginning, and aspiring farmers.
- Leverage Minnesota agriculture to create positive climate and ecosystem impact, providing the resources farmers need to build the health of their soil, which will clean our water, build resiliency from extreme weather, and combat climate change.
- Link nutrition and food access needs to Minnesota agricultural producers, ensuring all Minnesotans have nutritious food

We recognize that these priorities are interconnected, and decision makers should be given a budget target with room to support Minnesota's farm and food system holistically. In 2022, with a surplus of \$7.7 billion, the Governor proposed a \$65 million agriculture budget increase. With a surplus of \$17.6 billion, the Agriculture Committees deserve at least a \$110 million budget target discretionary increase. This level of support will demonstrate that the House and Senate Majorities are tangibly showing up for and delivering for farmers and rural Minnesotans and will take advantage of proposed strategic opportunities for one time investment included in the Agriculture budget.

As a major agricultural state, Minnesota is uniquely poised to lead the nation in investment in our farmers and supporting consistent access to food for all residents. Thank you for

your leadership and we hope to work with you to support and invest in our farmers and food system.

Sincerely,

Appetite For Change
Climate Land Leaders
Conservation Minnesota
Duluth Young Farmers Coalition
Friends of the Mississippi River
Global Greenbiz
Hmong American Farmers Association
Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy
Land Access Alliance
Land Stewardship Project
Latino Economic Development Center
Midwest Farmers of Color Collective
Minnesota Farmers' Market Association
Multicultural Kids Network
Neighborhood Roots
Project Sweetie Pie
Renewing the Countryside
Second Harvest Heartland
Sustainable Farming Association of MN
The Food Group
The Village Agricultural Cooperative
Vote Climate